

VZCZCXRO1054
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHMOS
DE RUEHGB #0848/01 0751354
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161354Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3325
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000848

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SHIA COALITION HARDLINER'S VIEW OF ATTACKS ON SHIA
COMMUNITIES

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert S. Ford for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. In a March 14 meeting, SCIRI member Shaikh Jalal ad Din al-Sagheer (from Baratha mosque) told PolCouns about Shia families fleeing their homes fearing violence from Sunnis. He warned that continued violence against the Shia may trigger a more violent reaction than seen after the February 22 attack on the Samarra shrine. Al-Sagheer scolded PolOffs for the lack of USG involvement in this crisis and urged the USG to deal with the displaced families "crisis" while it is still relatively small. We will meet with Shia Islamist and Baghdad provincial authorities on March 18 to discuss the issue of displaced families in greater detail. End Summary.

Two Arcs of Crisis

¶2. (C) On March 14 prominent SCIRI member and cleric Shaikh Jalal ad Din al-Sagheer described two arcs of crisis, where Shia and Sunni communities are mixed, around Baghdad and from which the migration of Shia families is occurring. One arc spans from Taji south through Ghazaliya, Abu Ghraib, Radwanayah, and Dora to the river. The other arc spans from Mada'in to Naharwan to Diyala. With the exception of the Arab Jabour area, these two arcs almost encompass Baghdad and its suburbs. They also are areas where, he said, Sunni Arabs moved in since the 1970s. Al-Sagheer reported that people in Taji launch mortars at Sadr City, Hooriya and Kadhimiya. Those in Abu Ghraib launch mortars on Amarat, Ghazaliya and Nur (Shouala). Arab Jabour launches mortars on Abu Chir. Arab Jabour connects to Latafiya and a straight line into Fallujah. When PolCouns commented that neighborhoods firing mortars at other neighborhoods sounded like Beirut, al-Sagheer corrected him: the Shia have not fired back - yet. He asserted that in the days following the February 22 Samarra attack, Shia militias roamed and attacked throughout Baghdad. (He didn't apologize for it but rather said it was a fact.) He warned that such violence could erupt again if there is a major terror attack against the Shia. He anticipated that Shia violence would trigger a counter reaction from the Sunnis.

Background

¶3. (C) Al-Sagheer provided PolCouns with a historical background on Saddam's security circle around Baghdad. In the 1970's Saddam imported Sunni farmers to areas surrounding Baghdad (such as Shurta, Rasalah, Jadriya and Amarkaata). Descendants of these farmers entered into the Saddam's security services, creating a Sunni security belt

around the city. In addition, Saddam penetrated predominantly Shia areas by importing Sunni families into various districts like Muthanna Zayuna. The legal framework also discriminated against Shia seeking to buy property, he claimed. These policies severely altered the demography, resulting in dwindling Shia majority neighborhoods in Baghdad like Karada and Yarmouk.

Displaced Families

¶4. (C) Al-Sagheer told PolCouns that Shia families are being forced from their homes and fleeing to their extended families in Najaf, Karbala, Hillah, Diyala, Kut, Wasit, Kirkuk and Baghdad. In his opinion, the Shia are fleeing under threat from mixed areas to places where there is a strong Shia majority, increasing sectarian divisions. He claimed to have spoken with the governors of Najaf, Karbala and Wasit that day and that each had spoken of "hundreds" of displaced families coming into their provinces from the Baghdad area.

Iraqi Government Not Engaged

¶5. (C) Al-Sagheer blasted the Iraqi Government for paying no attention to the issue of the displaced families; he sneered that those who should be helping, like the Red Crescent, are merely stealing. There is no count of because displaced Iraqis do not know to whom they can turn for help. They merely rely on Iraqi culture and seek help from their families.

BAGHDAD 00000848 002 OF 002

¶6. (C) In addition to providing immediate assistance to displaced families that have no means of subsistence, al-Sagheer suggested that the most important thing is to give Iraqis a sense that something is being done on security and that they have a role in it. He suggested three solutions to the current crisis:

- Reinsert capable Iraqi security forces into the Baghdad suburbs and the city center and enforce strict security measures. He called this the best solution, but he was unsure whether the Iraqi forces were capable alone.
- Step up coalition operations dramatically in the Baghdad suburbs, in conjunction with Iraqi forces. He cautioned that more patrols would not suffice; traffic controls had to be instituted.
- Apply Constitution Article 58, paragraph three of the TAL to Baghdad, because an alteration of demography has occurred. He said this need not mean that Sunni families would be moved out of the Baghdad suburbs. Rather, it should be government policy to reverse the demographic change by settling large numbers of Shia in new housing projects on agricultural land in predominantly Sunni Arab suburbs of Baghdad like Abu Ghreib. Al-Sagheer said the next government could take Shia from densely populated areas (like Sadr City and Shouala) to live in these new projects. Al-Sagheer reasoned that with density comes more infrastructure, police, government institutions, and civil society development. These newly developed areas would then deter terrorist infiltration into the city center and help stabilize the suburbs themselves.

¶7. (C) Al-Sagheer urged that the U.S. take the issue of displaced persons more seriously now while the problem is relatively small and manageable. This required both more security steps to make families feel safer and to mobilize the Iraqi government to do more. He urged the Embassy to identify and bring together different parts of Iraq (MoDM,

MOI, Shahid Sadr and the Shia Coalition) to address this crisis. He lauded the Ambassador for his ability to energize the entities into providing a rapid response. PolCouns said he would help identify a working group.

Comment

18. (C) We still have no precise numbers of how many displaced families there are in the Baghdad area. Al-Sagheer's observation that there is no central government or NGO office working the issue suggests one reason why the data about them is so hard to find. Moreover, we recall that in the November 2004 Fallujah operation, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis left that city but we never saw tent cities or refugee centers handling anywhere close to that number of displaced persons. Instead, the Fallujans went to stay with families in Baghdad and other locales. Sagheer has motives to paint the displaced persons picture darkly: the Shia Islamists that run Baghdad province don't look particularly competent now and he understands they could use American help. We should also be sensitive, however, to the image on Shia TV stations that compare the expulsion of relatively small numbers of Shia families to the 1991 experience when Saddam cracked down on the Shia uprising. We are organizing a meeting with the Baghdad authorities for March 18.

KHALILZAD